

Message Text

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APPROVED BY EA/ VN: LBASKEW

OSD/ISA: MAJ. MCDONALD (DRAFT)

JCS(J-3): CAPT. STEVENS

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INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: MARR, MOPS, ETRN, VN, UK.

SUBJ: STATUS OF MINE CLEARING IN VIETNAM

REFS: A. LONDON 3856 B. LONDON 3994

1. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MAY BE USED AS A BACKGROUND FOR BRIEFINGS OR IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES ON MINE CLEARING. OPERATION " END SWEEP" CONDUCTED BY US NAVAL TASK FORCE 78 IS THE US PROGRAM FOR THE CLEARANCE OF US MINES PLACED IN THE WATERS OF NVN UNDER THE TERMS OF THE JANUARY 27 PROTOCOL. BOTH AIRBORNE AND SURFACE MINE COUNTERMEASURE UNITS WILL BE USED TO CLEAR US MINES FROM THE TERRITORIAL WATERS, PORTS, HARBORS AND WATERWAYS OF NORTH VIETNAM. SURFACE UNITS (US NAVY MINESWEEPERS) COMMENCED MINE CLEARING OPERATIONS ON FEBRUARY 8. AIRBORNE MINE CLEARING UNITS (HELICOPTER TOWING MINESWEEPING DEVICES) COMMENCED OPERATIONS IN THE UNCLASSIFIED

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MAIN HAIPHONG SHIPPING CHANNEL ON FEBRUARY 27. THE ACTUAL PRIORITY OF AREAS TO BE CLEARED IS BEING DETERMINED JOINTLY THROUGH FREQUENT MEETINGS BETWEEN US AND DRV MINING EXPERTS. THESE MEETINGS ARE NORMALLY ALTERNATED BETWEEN HAIPHONG AND THE TASK FORCE FLAGSHIP USS NEW ORLEANS. MANY OF THE MINES HAVE A SELF DESTRUCT FEATURE AND WILL EXPLODE AT A PRESET TIME. NUMEROUS SELF DESTRUCTION EXPLOSIONS HAVE BEEN OBSERVED BY US PERSONNEL SINCE EARLY FEBRUARY. THE SPECIAL WARNINGS ISSUED BY THE US AS NOTICES TO MARINERS WARNING OF THE RISKS INVOLVED IN TRANSITTING THE MINED AREAS REMAIN IN EFFECT. UPON CONCLUSION OF THE MINE CLEARING OPERATION THE US WILL CANCEL THE UARNINGS. A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THE MAJOR CHANNEL INTO HAIPHONG HAS ALREADY BEEN CLEARED AND IT IS ESTIMATED THAT BARRING US/ DRV NEGOTIATION PROBLEMS, EXTENDED PERIODS OF ADVERSE WEATHER, OR UNFORESEEN MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS ALL COASTAL AREAS WILL HAVE BEEN SWEEPED WITHIN SEVERAL MONTHS. THE US NAVY HAS ESTABLISHED A SCHOOL AT HAIPHONG TO TRAIN DRV PERSONNEL IN THE TECHNIQUES OF SWEEPING AND CLEARING THE INLAND WATERWAYS. FOR THE MOST PART THIS WORK WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED BY NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL WITH US NAVAL ADVICE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INCLUDING MEANS TO CLEAR THE WATERWAYS. NO DATE HAS BEEN FIXED FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT BUT ALL EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO CONCLUDE IT AS RAPIDLY AS THE WEATHER AND SAFETY RESTRICTIONS PERMIT. ROGERS

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